The Effects of the Takadimi Rhythm Method and Folk Songs on the Sight-Reading Abilities of Two High School Choirs

by

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Singing is the most common vehicle for music education. It can be taught with relative ease and it plays an important role in our society. The Wisconsin Standards for Music Education put "singing alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music" as the first standard for music education. It is also the first standard of the nine National Standards for Music Education. Today a cappella singing is enjoying new found popularity and young students everywhere want to imitate some of the popular a cappella singing they are watching on weekly television shows.

At the elementary level teaching students to sing well depends largely on their ability to hear well-modeled singing and reproduce what they hear. Singing can be used to aid tremendously at the elementary levels in teaching other core standards. Singing the "to be" verbs or "The Noun Song" aids in retention of basic language skills for elementary students. Students in an elementary social studies class can be heard singing the "50 States" to the tune of "Turkey in the Straw."

Kodaly believed that singing, and singing songs native to one's culture, was tantamount to successful music education. In her book *The Kodaly Context,* Choksy quotes Kodaly as having stated, "If one attempts to express the essence of this education in one word, it could only be—singing" (Choksy xxi). Kodaly's method of internalization has been taught successfully for many years at the elementary level, and

his use of solfege in his method is continued throughout all levels of vocal training. We can as easily hear a collegiate choir singing on solfege as we can a 5th grade choir.

What about students who do not hear good singing, or enough singing at the elementary level? What about students who were not taught or encouraged to sing at a younger age? What if those students decide one day in the future that they would like to be in a high school choir? Is it too late to teach the basic skills of good singing to high school students? Can we as educators and vocalists use some of the same techniques we use with elementary students to promote good singing at the high school level? Can the high school students be brought to a level of successful sight-singing using techniques commonly taught at the elementary level?

There are many systems of sight-singing in existence, and the goal of each is similar, that being music literacy. Recently a method has been presented called "Takadimi." Takadimi deals specifically with the rhythm side of sight-singing.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of integrating the Kodaly sequence with the Takadimi rhythmic approach on high school students' singing and sight-singing skills.

Sub problems

1. How can the use of folk songs affect pitch internalization and audiation on choral high school students' sight-singing skills?

2. How can the Takadimi syllables be integrated with the Kodaly approach?

3. How can the combination of the Kodaly method with Takadimi be integrated into high school choir literature to improve choral students' sight-singing skills?

Basic Assumptions

1. Students will comprehend both folk songs and Takadimi method.

2. Both folk songs and rhythmic reading are vehicles for music literacy.

3. Both are universal in use.

4. The school administration approves all advances in music education.

Definition of Terms

Patsching The act of assigning a physical action in the body to keep beat.

Audiation The ability to learn music solely through listening.

Takadimi A system of rhythmic syllabication.

Phonation Ability to speak music using rhythm syllable or solfege.

Solfege A method of reading music with designated pitches instead of letter names.

Delimitations

1. The study will deal with only high school students.

2. The study will not consider differences in age or gender.

3. The study will not consider the vocal ranges of the students.

4. The study will not consider any private lessons taken by the students.

5. The study will only use Takadimi syllables to foster rhythmic literacy.

6. The study will only consider the effects shown during choral rehearsal time.

Need for the Study

The need for the study is two-fold. One, high school students need to be able to sight-sing successfully; and two, any method used must be able to appeal to older students.

CHAPTER 2

Related Research

Students who have learned to sight-read can learn music independently, giving them a greater enjoyment of music throughout their lives. In a review of *Building Choral Excellence: Teaching Sight-Singing in the Classroom* by Steven M. Demorest, Paul Henley suggests the "successful sight-singing instruction is perhaps a harbinger of choral success" (Henley 2). When a vocalist is adept at sight-singing the ability to move from the notation to the interpretation is increased. Teachers who utilize sight-singing with their choirs teach more efficiently thus allowing the quantity and the quality of music a choir can learn to be increased. For these reasons, high school choir teachers have striven to teach sight-singing to their students. In his article "Sight-Singing Systems: Current Practice and Survey of All State Choristers," Alan McClung states, "The ability to sing music on sight is considered a fundamental goal of music education and a key to the development of an independent music learner"(McClung 1). Successful sight-singing involves the internalization of two components, rhythm and pitch.

Bloom's Taxonomy

When Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive development is applied to the process of internalizing pitch and rhythm it shows that students must:

1.   have a **<u>knowledge</u>** of the notation for both rhythm and pitch,

2.   **<u>comprehend</u>** the meaning of the notational symbols,

3.   be able to **<u>apply</u>** that knowledge to the context,

4.   **<u>analyze</u>** the music to understand how it should be performed or sung,

5.   **<u>synthesize</u>** the components of rhythm and pitch and

6.   **<u>evaluate</u>** the final product.

Takadimi System

The methods of successful internalization in both pitch and rhythm have all evolved from the method known as "sound before symbol." In his article "Takadimi: A Rhythm for All Ages," Don Ester reiterates sound before symbol as having "been a fundamental component of music learning theories such as those promoted by educational theorists Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, James Mursell, Jerome Bruner, Robert Gagne and Edwin E. Gordon" (Ester 1). Zoltán Kodály stressed sound before symbol in his method of music instruction. He separated the sounds of pitch reproduction from those used in the production of rhythm. Kodály suggested the use of rhythm syllables as an aid to successful rhythmic phonation (Choksy 10).

There are many methods utilized for the internalization of pitch and rhythm. Upon examining selected methods for successful rhythmic reading, it was discovered that the use of numbers and syllables was most frequently used. Ester explains "Any approach to rhythm literacy that is truly sound-first based must use a beat oriented rather than a notation-based syllable. It is imperative to assign a specific syllable to the beat so that the students always chant the beat using the same syllable, regardless of meter" (Ester 2).

Dr. Carol Krueger explains systems of rhythmic syllabification in her book,

Progressive Sight Singing (2007) comparing methods of four commonly used systems of

rhythmic syllabification. She compares the rhythm syllables of Gordon, Kodály, McHose

and Tibbs, and Takadimi. She explains Gordon's system uses "du" for the beat unit, and

"du-de" and "du-ta-de-ta" for the division and subdivision. Kodály uses "ta" for the beat

unit and "ti-ti" and "ti-re-ti-re" for the division and subdivision. A number is assigned to

the beat unit in the system offered by McHose and Tibbs with the division and

subdivision spoken as "1- te" and "1-ta-te-ta" (Krueger 7). In the article "Takadimi: A

Beat-Oriented System of Rhythm Pedagogy" Richard Hoffman, William Pelto, and John

White explain the Takadimi system: "Any attack on the beat is called "ta" and any attack

on the second half of the beat is called "di." Further divisions are called "ka" and "mi."

At the subdivision level, then, the syllables yield the pattern "Takadimi". The name we

have given the system… (Note that unlike the other systems examined Takadimi specifies

a unique syllable for each division.)" (Hoffman et al 14).

Kodaly System

The Kodály system uses different syllables for the start of beat. This is a successful

system in an elementary music setting where the students are primarily discovering

patterns and rhythm values, but as Hoffman, Pelto and White explain, the system falls

short when used with more sophisticated music (Hoffman et al 9). The "ti" is used to

speak an eighth note in both simple and compound meters without consideration of the

beat unit. When this concept is applied to Bloom's taxonomy it can be argued that using

different syllables for the start of beat breaks down in the analysis concept for music and slows the internalization of beat.

McHose/Tibbs Method

McHose/Tibbs, as previously noted, assign a number to the initial attack of the beat, but as McHose/Tibbs progress through the compound meters the syllable "ta" can be repeated multiple times to speak a rhythm such as "1-ta-la-ta-li-ta" when audiating sixteenth-notes in 6/8 meter. Confusion can arise when a student is first exposed to compound meter. Without any previous understanding of meter, the sound-before-sight is not as clearly represented in the McHose/Tibbs method because of the repeated "ta" in compound meter. When a syllable is repeated to identify two different parts of the beat the analysis level of Bloom's taxonomy becomes clouded. Similarly, the evaluation level of Bloom again is not as clear with one syllable representing two different parts of the beat. Bloom's taxonomy applied to McHose/Tibbs falls short in the analysis level as well as in the evaluation level.

Gordon Method

Gordon also devised a system with a clear definition of the beat unit. However, once again when compound meters are recited some confusion is possible. In 6/8 meter Gordon speaks the eighth-notes as "du-da-di." When those same three eighth-notes are phonated in a 7/8 meter they become "du-ba-di." Hoffman cites Gordon's book *Learning*